

Central Region Life

NOVEMBER 2025

CELEBRATING THE 2025 RECIPIENTS OF THE LOVING GRANDPARENT AWARD

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Each year, the American Baptist Churches of the Central Region honors faithful individuals whose lives embody the spirit of loving Christian mentorship across generations. The Margaret Nielsen Loving Christian "Grandparents" Award, established through a Charitable Gift Annuity in honor of Margaret Nielsen, recognizes those who exemplify the heart of Christian "grand-parenting"—sharing Christ's love through encouragement, care, and nurturing relationships with children and youth.

Recipients of this award are chosen for their Christ-like influence and the lasting positive impact they make in their churches and communities. Whether through teaching Sunday School, assisting with Vacation Bible School, or simply offering steady love and guidance to their grandchildren and other young people, these honorees model faith in action.

The 2025 recipients of the Margaret Nielsen Loving Christian "Grandparents" Award are:

- Becky Poe, West Side Baptist Church, Topeka, Kansas
- Bud and Sue Garner, First Baptist Church, Topeka, Kansas
- Fred and Marida Meece, Milton Baptist Church, Milton, Kansas
- Shelby Howard, First Baptist Church, Horton, Kansas

Each of these individuals or couples are active members of their congregations, known for the countless ways they serve—from teaching and mentoring to caring for their own families and the children of others. Their lives bear witness to the truth that Christian grand-parenting is not only about age or family ties, but about embodying Christ's love and compassion for the next generation.

We extend heartfelt congratulations to Becky Poe, Bud and Sue Garner, Fred and Marida Meece, and Shelby Howard—faithful servants whose love, generosity, and example continue to nurture young hearts and strengthen the family of faith throughout our region.



**FRED & MARIDA MEECE
FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH
MILTON, KANSAS**



**BECKY POE
WEST SIDE BAPTIST CHURCH
TOPEKA, KANSAS**



Loving Grandparent Award Receipients

**BUD & SUE GARNER
FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH
TOPEKA, KANSAS**



**SHELBY HOWARD
FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH
HORTON, KANSAS**



WHERE YOU GO, I WILL GROW

REV. MELISSA NEWBERRY, EVENT COORDINATOR

**But Ruth said, "Do not press me to leave you, to turn back from following you!
Where you go, I will go; where you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people and your God
my God. Ruth 1:16 NRSVUE**

Fifteen years have passed since I stood among the great coast redwoods located just north of San Francisco, near the town of Mill Valley, CA. As guests enter the front gate of Muir Woods, they are greeted by a redwood cross section that was taken from a fallen tree. Based on the concentric rings, the tree (that came down in 1930) was believed to be approximately 1,021 years old. Once you begin to walk the paths leading deeper into the forest, the majestic presence and sacred structures begin to overtake your senses. While their longevity, height and circumference are impressive, the most impressive thing about these giant sequoia sempervirens is their root system. Instead of growing deep roots, they grow lateral roots. Eventually, each individual tree's root system intertwines with the other trees around them. Their ability to survive and thrive is based on their interconnectedness with others.

While the Bible is filled with pages of relational examples of how God's people survived and thrived in the various circumstances they endured, one of my favorite stories is found in the book of Ruth. Although there is a myriad of lessons that can be gleaned from just five short chapters, one that rises to the top for me is the choice that Ruth made to stay in relationship with Naomi. She could have gone home. She could have gone back to her father's house. She could have returned to her people. But she didn't. Looking at this biblical witness from the vantage point of several millennia later, how profoundly grateful we are that Ruth decided to form "lateral roots" and intertwine her life with Naomi's.

As you consider the various people in your life, who would be those with whom you have formed "lateral roots"? These are the lives that have become intertwined with yours through the various relationships in your life and those whom you choose to be interconnected with. They serve as a tremendous reminder of who God is and how God created us to function in this world. God is relational, has designed humanity to be relational, and has set an example for us through the existence of the Trinity. We are not designed to go it alone, to be completely self-sufficient, or fully rely on self to traverse this journey we call life. We are created to put our roots down in Christ Jesus and to form an interconnectedness with other believers. In doing so, we will bear witness to the One who created us, the One who sustains us and the One who has redeemed us.



PLANNED GIVING

HELPING YOU TO GIVE GENEROUSLY,
REV. TIM SCHWARTZ
KBCF DIRECTOR OF PLANNED GIVING
913-424-9939 / 785-272-7622
TIMMANS39@GMAIL.COM
TIM.SCHWARTZ@ABCCR.ORG

During the past four years that I have written this article, I have always focused on Thanksgiving during the month of November. I still want to do that this year, but in a different way. I want to divide it up between thanks and giving. While I always try to be thankful for everyone, every place, everything and every aspect of my life, of course, like everyone else, I am not perfect and there are some days when I may not be thankful at all, even though I try to be.

Having worked for the Kansas Baptist Convention Foundation for 5 years now and having served as the Director of Planned Giving for almost 4 years now, I have to say from the bottom of my heart that I am thankful for all of you, our annuitants and beneficiaries! You are the reason that we exist and that we have been around for almost 66 years. Without you, your funds, your gifts and your Investments in the foundation, we would not have a leg to stand on. Some of you have been our annuitants for a while and some for a very long time and the KBCF is supremely grateful that you have entrusted your funds to us during the past six decades plus.

I am also thankful for our accountants, our board, our region and foundation staff and our excellent investment team at Endeavor Management, Inc. All of these important people serve a vital role in a variety of areas in the work of the foundation.

While it may sound more trivial, I am also thankful for our planned giving software, PG Calc, and their superior team of managers, experts and tech support, who are always there when I need them.

I also want to say a big thank you to my colleague, Rev. Wilma Engle, who is my trusted advisor, knowledgeable consultant, and there for me when I need her as well.

Finally, I want to say thank you to each of you who read this article every month in the Central Region Life. I never really hear any complaints, comments or critiques from you, but I do welcome them all as part of my learning and growing experience while I serve the foundation community.

Now I want to focus on giving because I want to share some important facts from studies that came out in a report on giving this year. This report is called the Giving USA Annual Report on Philanthropy and it is for the year 2024. This report estimates that \$592.5 billion dollars of charitable giving happened last year in 2024. Of that amount, three quarters of the money came from individuals, 20% came from foundations and 8% from corporations.

Here are a few more findings from the report. During the past four decades, total charitable giving has grown in most years, even after adjusting for inflation. This pattern indicates neither changes in tax law nor shifts in the balance of political power have had much impact on giving. What they have also found out is that, in general, the way the economy goes, so does charitable giving.

Also during the past 40 years, individual giving has dropped from about 80% of total giving to 75% while foundation giving has increased from about 5% to nearly 20%.

Another companion report by Giving USA entitled "Giving by Generation" offers some reasons for optimism. I expect that some of you already know this, but their report finds that the Baby Boomer generation continues to outgive other generations by a significant margin. They also report that there is a strong correlation between involvement and engagement and giving. They say the good news is that the younger generations are the ones most likely to engage and become involved.

Still, you don't have to take my word for it, you can look up the report on your own. It is research that has been done by the Lilly School of Philanthropy and published in their report: Giving USA, The Annual Report on Philanthropy for the Year 2024. You can easily do an internet search and find the report online. There are more facts and findings in there, plus there are a lot of multicolored charts and graphs as well. It is a very helpful resource if you want to learn more.

If you wish to do more than learn, and you would like to fund a charitable gift annuity with the Kansas Baptist Convention Foundation, please reach out to me by phone, text, email or voicemail and I will be happy to help you as you continue the giving that you wish to do because your heart is full of thanks for all that God has blessed you with!

Source: Giving USA—Annual Report on Philanthropy for the Year 2024.

SABBATICAL NEWS!

Here is a brief summary of what Gregg will be doing during his sabbatical from September-December 2025. First, some foundational information on the idea from the Bible. The sabbatical is an extension of the biblical concept of Sabbath, providing a longer period for rest, reflection, and spiritual growth, rooted in the belief that God provides and sustains His people, both physically and spiritually. The concept of a sabbatical finds its basis in the biblical principle of the Sabbath, with both sharing the idea of rest and renewal. You might want to check out Genesis 2, Exodus 20, and Leviticus 25, which serves as the foundation for the idea of a sabbatical.

For those who would like more detail about what he will be doing during his sabbatical, click the details button below. He will also be keeping a journal, which you can find by clicking the journal button below, for anyone interested in following his journey over the next few months.



NOTE FROM GREGG

I am grateful to the Central Region for providing the gift of a sabbatical and as a reminder, I'll be focusing in other areas of life from September-December 2025. During this time, please bring questions and information you'd normally bring to me to Jennifer Schneider.

jennifer.schneider@abccr.org





CHRISTMAS FUNDRAISER & OPEN HOUSE SOARING EAGLE GIFT SHOP

Holly Jolly Bidding
Silent Auction Daily

"Ladies Night - Rockin' on the Rez"
Thursday November 13th 5-8:30pm
FEATURING NDN ELVIS!!!

*1st 50 customers receive a Goody Bag
*20% OFF Coupon *Door Prizes *Hors d'oeuvres

"Lunch Hour Shopping Power"
Friday November 14th 11am-2pm
FASHION FRENZY-WHERE PAST MEETS PRESENT
*Free Gift with Purchase *15% OFF Coupon *Door
Prizes every 15 minutes *Heavy Hors d'oeuvres

"Jingle Bell Family Bash"
Saturday November 15th 10am-4pm
*Live Entertainment *Coupons (Up to 75% OFF)
*Door Prizes *1st 50 kids win a Goody Bag
*Cake Walk *Face & Hand Painting *Kids paint with
Mary Beth Timothy * Light Hors d'oeuvres

\$10 Indian Tacos - Saturday Only

Murrow Indian Children's Home
2540 Murrow Cir.
Muskogee OK 74403

PRAYER

EMPHASIS

As we enter this season of Thanksgiving, let us offer prayers of thanks to God, our source of everything; the fountain of all holiness. I want to keep this simple, so I will ask you to do a couple of things.

Take some time to think about your favorite attribute or characteristic of God, and then thank God for that.

Ponder a little and think about the favorite ability or talent that God has given you, and then thank God for that.

Reflect some more about a meaningful, sacred moment or a "God event" in your life and praise and thank God for that!

Amidst all the busyness of the upcoming holiday season, take some time to quietly sit, reflect and ponder on all of the simple ways that God is at work in your life and continue offering prayers of Thanksgiving and praise for all of those treasures. As the scripture says,

"It is good to give thanks to the Lord, to sing praises to the Most High."
Psalm 92:1 (NLT)



ABCCR

Women in Ministry Retreat



Sacred rest for sacred work

● Saturday, November 15
Autrey Retreat Center
Council Grove, Kansas

\$20 a person

RETREAT INFORMATION

Please save the date for our Women in Ministry Retreat on **Saturday, November 15th** at 9:00 a.m. We'll gather at the beautiful home and retreat center of Jim and Marsha Autrey in Council Grove, Kansas.

We are delighted to welcome Rev. Soozie Whitten-Ford as our facilitator, guiding us through meaningful conversations, study, and fellowship centered on the vital theme of self-care for women in ministry. Together, we'll find space to pause, breathe deeply, and experience God's renewing presence.

A limited number of rooms are available at the retreat center. If you'd like to reserve one, please contact Nancy. You must have a roommate to reserve a room. Rooms will be assigned on a first-come, first-served basis. All other lodging arrangements will be on your own.

If you're able to arrive in Council Grove on Friday evening, join us for an informal dinner and time of fellowship to begin the retreat with connection and rest. Come ready to be refreshed, encouraged, and renewed for the journey ahead.

For more information, contact Nancy Killingsworth:
nancyjsnyder@gmail.com

[Register Here](#)

Pastoral **INSTALLATION**

of PASTOR-ELECT

REV. WILLIAM A. BREWER



First Lady

REV. PATRICE R. BREWER

OFFICIANT

Rev. Dr. Anthony L. Byrd, Sr.
Moderator - Northeast District
Elwood, Kansas

INSTALLATION PREACHER

Rev. Dr. Desmond C. Lamb
Pastor, Forest Grove Baptist Church
Kansas City, Kansas

Sunday, November 16, 2025 at 3:00pm

Installation Venue:

Leavenworth Riverfront Community Center
123 N. Esplanade Street, Leavenworth, Kansas 66048

Please contact Sister Angie Thomas at (913) 240-9561 for more information

TOP BENEFITS SENIORS GAIN IN AN INDEPENDENT LIVING COMMUNITY

Retirement isn't just about slowing down—it's about living life on your own terms, with the freedom to focus on what matters most. For many older adults, an independent living community is the perfect way to balance autonomy with convenience, connection, and peace of mind.

At Prairie Homestead Senior Living, we've seen how moving into an independent living community can enrich daily life in ways that go far beyond a beautiful home and helpful amenities. Here are some of the top benefits seniors enjoy:

- 1. A Maintenance-Free Lifestyle-** Say goodbye to mowing lawns, shoveling snow, and handling costly home repairs. In an independent living community, all the maintenance—inside and out—is taken care of for you. That means more time for hobbies, travel, and quality time with friends and family.
- 2. A Built-In Social Network-** Loneliness can be a real challenge as we age, but independent living makes connection easy. From game nights and group outings to fitness classes and shared meals, opportunities for friendship are just steps from your front door.
- 3. Wellness and Fitness Opportunities-** Staying healthy is easier when you have convenient access to wellness programs. Prairie Homestead offers activities like exercise classes, walking clubs, and wellness checks that keep residents active, energized, and feeling their best.
- 4. Safety and Security-** Independent living means you can maintain your lifestyle without sacrificing safety. Features like well-lit walkways, on-site staff, and secure entryways provide reassurance for both residents and their loved ones.
- 5. Freedom with Support When You Need It-** One of the greatest benefits? You keep your independence while knowing help is nearby if it's ever needed. And if your needs change over time, you can easily transition to a higher level of care without having to leave the community you know and love.
- 6. More Time for What You Love-** When you're not bogged down by household chores, you have more time for travel, volunteering, gardening, or simply relaxing. It's not just about where you live—it's about how you live.

Discover the Prairie Homestead Difference. Independent living at Prairie Homestead is about creating a life that's full, connected, and worry-free. Our patio homes apartments offer comfort, convenience, and a sense of belonging—without the headaches of homeownership.

Visit prairiehomestead.org to learn more about our vibrant senior living community. At Prairie Homestead, independence isn't just maintained—it's celebrated.



FAN THE FLAME

College and Young Adult Retreat

March 6-8, 2026

Camp White Memorial
Council Grove, Kansas

HAPPY
THANKS
GIVING

SR. ADULT RETREAT 2026

SAVE THE DATE
April 22-23
Milton Baptist Church

Put this information on your calendar
now. You won't want to miss this
event.

Wholly Holy Hospitality

More details will be shared soon!



The keynote speaker for the 2026 Senior Adult Retreat is Rev. Soozie Witten Ford. She served as Executive Minister with the American Baptist Churches of Indiana and Kentucky for more than nine years, retiring in 2021. Her previous ministry experiences include faculty positions with Sterling College, Sterling, KS and Central Baptist Theological Seminary in Shawnee, KS; pastoral positions with First Baptist Church Casper, WY and Calvary Baptist Church in Cheyenne, WY; regional ministry with Mid-American Baptist Churches (Iowa and Minnesota); and national stewardship ministry with ABCUSA.

In post-retirement, Rev. Soozie Whitten Ford served the Office of the General Secretary ABCUSA as the Interim Associate General Secretary for Regional Ministries. At the same time, she served in a volunteer position as the Special Assistant to the Executive Director of International Ministries, Rev. Dr. Sharon Koh, in the role of Chaplain.

Soozie Whitten Ford shares her life with Rev. Homer Ford and together they have two daughters, a son-in-law, and a granddaughter. Unscheduled time is often filled with connecting with family and dear friends; reading suspense novels; chasing the genealogical clues left by elusive ancestors; coaxing flowers to grow instead of weeds; knitting and planning the next travel adventure.



Registration information can be found on the Central Region website at www.abccr.org and through the weekly emails sent from the region office. The Sr. Adult Retreat will be held at Milton Baptist Church, Milton, KS. Directions and hotel information can also be found at this same site.

Hotel Options:

1. Hampton Inn by Hilton 455 N Crowne Drive Goddard, Ks. 67052 316-453-0444

Rooms here will be \$109 per night plus tax. Please use "Senior Adult Retreat or code 503" when making your reservation. We will use our church bus to shuttle people from the hotel to the church and back. Directions are on the bottom of this page.

2. Cobblestone Inn & Suites 899 Frontage Rd Harper Ks. 67058 620-896-2400

Rooms here will be \$125 per night plus tax



ABCCR SENIOR ADULT RETREAT

April 22-23, 2026

Milton Baptist Church, 1213 N Sycamore Rd. Milton, KS 67106

Guest Speaker, Rev. Soozi Whitten-Ford
Theme: "Wholly Holy Hospitality" Scripture: Romans 12:10-13 NIV

Name: _____
(If registering as a couple, please write spouse's name below)

Phone: _____

Spouse: _____

Email: _____

Address: _____

Home Church: _____

City / State / Zip: _____

& City _____

First Timer to the Retreat? Yes _____ No _____

of Guests _____ Total \$ _____

Full Retreat (includes program and 3 meals) per person

_____ @ \$95.00 per person _____

One Day only (Wednesday or Thursday) per person

_____ @ \$70.00 per person _____

Discount Applied (February 1, 2026 deadline) _____

Total Amount Due _____

Dietary Requirements:

Sugar Free ☐ Gluten Free ☐

Vegetarian ☐

PLEASE NOTE: We will try but cannot assure to meet all dietary requirements

Interest Groups (please mark preference)

2:30 PM Wednesday – Bells ☐ or Outreach
Uncomplicated ☐

3:35 PM Choir ☐

10:30 AM Thursday – Craft \$5 ☐ or Biblical Hospitality ☐

Online registration is available at www.abccr.org

Bus Transportation – The host church is offering to provide transportation from church/hotel & hotel/church in Goddard, KS. I'm interested: Yes ☐

Hotel Information – Hampton Inn by Hilton, 455 N Crowne Dr., Goddard, KS 316-453-0444. Cost is \$109 plus taxes if you use Code 503. Other hotels are available in the area but with no transportation provided.

Abbreviated Schedule

Wed.	11:00 AM	Registration Begins
	11:30 AM	Lunch
	12:30 PM	Session #1
	2:30 PM	Interest Groups
	5:15 PM	Dinner
	6:30 PM	Session #2
Thurs.	8:30 AM	Registration
	9:00 AM	Group Study
	10:30 AM	Interest Groups
	12:00 PM	Lunch
	1:15 PM	Session #3

Please make checks payable to **Senior Adult Retreat** and mail payment and completed registration form to:

Senior Adult Retreat, John Williams, Registrar
C/O 5889 SW 29th Street, Topeka, KS 66614

Registration Deadline - April 8, 2026

**\$10 Late fee assessed if postmarked after April 8, 2026

Cancellation Policy: A full refund will be given if cancelled by April 15, 2026;
\$25 non-refundable cancellation fee per individual after April 15, 2026.

Cut here and retain this stub for your records and information

ABCCRSeniorAdultRetreat: Milton Baptist Church, 1213 N Sycamore Rd. Milton, KS 67106

Dates: April 22-23, 2026

Registration begins at 11:00 AM

Retreat begins with lunch at 11:30 AM

AB Women's Ministries of the Central Region

**National Theme:
Building God's Community**



**Summer Conference Date – June 5-6, 2026
Summer Conference Location – First Baptist Church Topeka, KS
Summer Conference Theme – Making a Difference Together
Keynote Speaker- Dr. Kathy Maxwell, Central Seminary**

What's Next?

Philippians 1:6



[Online Registration](#)

**Mid Winter Missions Conference
January 16-17, 2026
Prairie Homestead, Wichita
Guest Speaker: Jill Lowery**

2026 Mid-Winter Mission Conference

ABCCR

JANUARY 16-17, 2026

PRAIRIE HOMESTEAD

1605 W. MAY ST., WICHITA, KS

What's Next?

Philippians 1:6



Mid Winter Missions Conference
January 16-17, 2026
Prairie Homestead, Wichita
Guest Speaker: Jill Lowery

Name: _____

Address: _____

Email: _____

Phone number: _____

Registration is \$45 per person*.

This is to help cover travel expenses and honorarium for Jill Lowery. The Registration Fee also includes two meals**, (dinner and lunch provided by Prairie Homestead).

**We are unable to accommodate any special dietary needs for this event.

*Please make checks payable to: "Mid-Winter Mission Conference"

Mail completed form and registration fee to:

Melissa Newberry
101 Harper Dr.
Atchison, KS 66002

Or - Register and pay online at:
www.abccr.org , click on "events" tab

Registration form and fee are due no later than January 3, 2026. One registration per person. Lodging is on your own.

Schedule for event:

Friday, January 16	4:00 Registration Opens
	5:15 Dinner
	6:30 Evening Session
Saturday, January 17	9:00 Morning Session
	12:00 Lunch (this will conclude our time together)

An offering for Missions will be received.



mpyc-abc.org



MOUNTAINS & PRAIRIES *Youth Conference*

JUNE 14-18, 2026

**YMCA OF THE ROCKIES
SNOW MOUNTAIN RANCH
GRANBY, COLORADO**



Keynote Speaker
**REV. JOY
MARTINEZ- MARSHALL**

COST:
\$375 BEFORE MARCH 15, 2026
\$400 AFTER MARCH 15, 2026.

2026 CAMPING SCHEDULE

WHITE MEMORIAL HIGHSCHOOL CAMP

JULY 13-17, 2026
9th-12th grade

WHITE MEMORIAL MIDDLE SCHOOLCAMP

JULY 13-17, 2026
6th-9th grade

WHITE MEMORIAL JUNIORCAMP

JULY 20-24, 2026
4th-6th grade

CAMP CHRISTY HIGH SCHOOL CAMP

JUNE 1-5, 2026
9th-12th grade

CAMP CHRISTY MIDDLE SCHOOLCAMP

JUNE 8-12, 2026
6th-9th grade

CAMP CHRISTY JUNIORCAMP

JUNE 15-19, 2026
4th-6th grade

CAMP CHRISTY PRIMARY CAMP

JUNE 22-24, 2026
2nd-4th grade

CAMP CHRISTY DAY CAMP

JUNE 25-26, 2026
K-2nd grade

